

*England - Churches etc - Baptists - Kent and
Sussex Assoc* THE *of Particular Baptist Churches*

CIRCULAR LETTER, ¹²

FROM THE

ELDERS, MINISTERS, and MESSENGERS

OF THE

BAPTIST CHURCHES,

Assembled at BATTLE, in SUSSEX, the 7th and 8th Days of JUNE, 1785: (Maintaining the important Doctrines of three equal Persons in the divine Essence—Eternal and personal Election to Holiness here, and eternal Life hereafter—The original Guilt and Depravity of Mankind—Particular Redemption—Free Justification by the imputed Righteousness of CHRIST alone—Efficacious Grace in Regeneration—The Perseverance of the Saints to Glory. Professing likewise Water Baptism, upon a personal Confession of Faith in CHRIST, and Repentance towards God, according to the primitive Mode and Discipline of the Christian Church:)

To the several Churches of CHRIST whom they represent, or have received Letters from, meeting at Ashford, Sandhurst, Smarden, Tenterden, and Folkstone, in KENT; Battle, Rotherfield, Rye, Weavelsfield, and Lewes, in SUSSEX:

Beloved Brethren in the Lord,

BEING concerned for your growth and establishment in the grace of God, we willingly embrace every opportunity for that end and purpose. We know that men in general will acknowledge that they are sinners, but few there are who feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin; many persons, yea many professors speak against sin, while they live under the power of it, and never knew the deceitfulness of their hearts, because they have not been convinced by the Spirit of God. But the real Christian, who hath been convinced by the word and Spirit of God, not only mourns on account of his actual sins, but also that he is a fallen creature, born in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, a child of wrath, and under the curse of the law, and in a lost state as to any thing that he can do

do for himself; we may add, in a state of condemnation and death through original sin, that is, by Adam's disobedience, whose sin is imputed to all his offspring (1.). We wish you to be well acquainted with these bible truths, for unless you are brought, by the teachings of the Spirit of God, to a feeling sense of your undone, helpless and ruined state, by nature and practice: we know from experience and the word of God, that you will not seek for a free salvation, in that way which the Lord directs. Alas! Man is so far fallen from God, that he is not only unable to do any thing for his deliverance and salvation, but he is so blinded by sin and Satan, that he has no understanding in spiritual things; *the natural man*, says the apostle, *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (2.). No wonder then that so many are dreaming of the doctrine of merit by the deeds of the law, but that no man is justified by the law, in the sight of God, is evident: for, the just shall live by faith (3.). It is natural for men to seek justification by the deeds of the law: this was the mistake of the Jews, and is the mistake of every unconverted man (4.), *but if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain* (5.): if men live and die under the notion of salvation by their works, they will perish, for, *by the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh justified in his sight* (6.). The natural, unconverted man is so ignorant of himself, and of the divine law, that he vainly thinks he can make himself righteous before God, which is absolutely impossible (7.). The Lord Jesus Christ calls such persons thieves and robbers (8.), and, as such, they are in a dangerous condition, *for as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them* (9.).

Men may appear to be very religious and strict in their profession, yea, have much gospel light in their heads, and yet be under the wrath of God, and the curse of his law; no outward attainments can constitute us Christians, for, *except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* (1.). Except a divine change is wrought in the soul, in time, eternity will disclose the awful mistake of thousands, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest (2.). Without this change here, there can be no well-grounded hope of happiness hereafter: be-

(1.) Rom. v. 18. (2.) 1 Cor. ii. 14. (3.) Gal. iii. 11. (4.) Rom. x. 3.
 (5.) Gal. ii. 21. (6.) Rom. iii. 20. (7.) Job iv. 17. Rom. ix. 30, — 32.
 (8.) John x. 1. (9.) Gal. iii. 10. (1.) John iii. 5. (2.) Eccl. ix. 10.



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hold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (3.). We see the Jews could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief (4.), and our Lord declares that he that believeth not shall be damned (5.); and he has also said, I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me (6.). He is the only way to life and happiness. What a glorious savior do all those find the Lord Jesus to be, who have fled, by faith, for refuge, and have laid hold of the hope set before them in the gospel! They are saying, Lord Jesus! increase our faith. Faith is the gift of God, and it is increased by him, through the preaching of the blessed gospel, where the Lord Christ is set forth to the eye of faith, as the God-man, full of grace and truth. Are you looking to the efficacious sacrifice of this adorable savior, who his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and, by whose stripes we are healed? He was the lamb of God, shadowed forth by all those sacrifices under the law, who alone taketh away the sins of the world. Gospel ministers are now preaching redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (7.): Mark this—*according to the riches of his grace*; as Paul also says to Timothy, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose, and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began (8.). Here is a full, and everlasting pardon, for all your sins, through the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin, both original and actual (9.); it was for this end, that when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (1.).

O consider these precious portions of God's word, and if the blessed Spirit gives you a right understanding, they will be a sweet cordial to your fainting souls; it is the pleasure of our redeemer, as the great Physician, to heal every disease; but they that are whole, need not the Physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (2.); his invitation is to every heavy laden sinner, and he promises rest to all that come to him (3.): *Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief, as the Israelites did in the Wilderness, for they could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief* (4.) May the Lord give faith where it is not, and increase it where it is! The glorious Trinity have engaged in covenant for our salvation, and it is ma-

(3.) 2 Cor. vi. 2. (4.) Heb. iii. 19. (5.) Mark xvi. 16. (6.) John xiv. 6.
 (7.) Eph. i. 7. (8.) 2 Tim. i. 9. (9.) 1 John i. 7. (1.) Gal. iv. 4.
 (2.) Mark ii. 17. (3.) Matt. xi. 28, 29. (4.) Heb. iv. 11. iii. 19.

nifested in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; may the ever blessed Spirit manifest it to our hearts! that we may be enabled to believe the record that God hath given of his son, that we may be found in him not having on our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (5.)! True faith finds a righteousness set forth in the promises of the gospel, that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, and without which men shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Happy is that man to whom it is given in the behalf of Christ, to believe in his blessed name! He stands complete, and perfectly righteous in the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ: the Father hath accepted him in his beloved Son, *for of him, are ye in Christ Jesus, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption* (6.); *therefore ye are complete in him* (7.); mark that,—*complete in him*: Christ is all, and in all to the believer. God hath set forth his son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood (8.). The blessed man, is he to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, of whom he says, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered (9.) We may then reason with the apostle, and say, where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith (1.). The Father is reconciled to the sinner, and he is freely justified through faith in the righteousness of his Son. Those who have learnt, through grace, that all fulness is treasured up in Jesus Christ, will seek for peace and comfort in God's appointed way, which is, through faith in Christ; and they are learning the blessedness of living by faith on the Son of God, while the carnal, and ignorant world are pleasing themselves with the vain allurements of time and sense. The Christian is dead to the world, and his affections are on things above, not on things on the earth (2.); he hath received the Spirit of the Lord, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. May it be our concern more and more, to stand fast in that liberty, that we may, with open face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord (3.)! Until men are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and delivered from the law as a covenant of works, they cannot love God, nor render any acceptable obedience to him. *But now, saith the apostle, we are delivered from the law, that being*

(5.) Phil. iii. 9. (6.) 1 Cor. i. 30. (7.) Col. ii. 10. (8.) Rom. iii. 25.
(9.) Rom. iv. 6, 7. (1.) Rom. iii. 27. (2.) Col. iii. 2. (3.) 2 Cor. iii.
17, 18.

acad, wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (4.). This is a glorious deliverance: a deliverance from the curse and condemnation of the law, the wrath of God, and eternal death; neither shall sin have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace (5.).

Now we wish you to live under the sweet influence of the grace of God, which teaches us, *that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world* (6.). We shall ever despair of your getting a victory over your sins, so as to live to the glory of God, if you are not vitally united to the Lord Jesus Christ (7.). Though the believer may have many enemies without and within, who are very skilful in the use of their arms; he is ever to remember that the captain of his salvation, hath overcome them all; and Paul says, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Don't forget that the conquest is through Christ, thy head, ever keep Christ in view, then you will find, with Paul, that you can do all things through Christ strengthening you. And for your encouragement in this warfare, hear what the Lord of Hosts says, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness* (8.). I am thy God! This is a glorious discovery: his, as chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (9.), and there, and then blessed with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ. If we live in the enjoyment of these blessings, what cause have we to bless, and praise God, for an experience of his love and grace, manifested to us through Jesus Christ our Lord! May we receive that exhortation, which our Lord gave to his disciples, *In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven* (1.). We wish to be instrumental, in the hand of God, in bringing you more and more from righteous, and sinful self; these are two great evils in the world, which have proved the ruin of thousands, and of tens of thousands. We know no way to save you from these evils, but to point you to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is able, and willing to save; look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else (2.). The gospel received under the teaching of the Spirit of God, will bring men off from errors; how often are the dear children of God, misled, and cast down, by not looking more to the finished work of the son of God!

(4.) Rom. vii. 6. (5.) Rom. vi. 14. (6.) Tit. ii. 11, 12. (7.) Rom. vii. 4. (8.) Isa. xli. 10. (9.) Eph. i. 4. (1.). Luke x. 20. (2.) Isa. xlv. 22.

While we are viewing the blessed Jesus in the promises, we are, with joy, drawing water, out of the wells of salvation. If you are wishing (as we hope you are) to be more happy, and to enjoy more of the peace of God in your Consciences, remember that Christ is your peace, and you cannot enjoy it, but as you receive it, by faith, out of his fulness (3.).

We can never be sufficiently thankful for the blessings of providence, and for the riches of the free grace of God; yet it becomes the Christian well to give thanks for all things, unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The more we know of redeeming love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, the more we shall love God. It is necessary that we know him as one God and Father, reconciled to us through Christ; then from a principle of love to him as such, we shall walk in his ways, and shew forth the praises of him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (4.). May the Lord daily strengthen you, that you may go on rejoicing in his love! Fear not the difficulties you find in the way, but go forward, for there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit (5.). Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. He will bring thee on thy way, and lead thee in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. He will bring thee safe through all thy trials, to the end of thy journey; therefore be careful to give him all the glory of keeping thee; his promise is made to confirm thy faith in thy perseverance. These, with many more, are the privileges of them that believe in Jesus, and rejoice in his free salvation. *Beloved brethren, we now commend you to him, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. AMEN.*

THOMAS PURDY, MODERATOR.

(3.) Col. ii. 6, 7.

(4.) 1 Pet. ii. 9.

(5.) Rom. viii. 1.

BREVIATES.

B R E V I A T E S.

ON Tuesday the 7th of June, 1785, the associated Ministers and Messengers met, at three o'clock in the afternoon, when our brethren *Clifford* and *Spilsted* succeeded each other in prayer—Brother *Purdy* was chosen Moderator—Who immediately read the preliminaries of the Association—The Church at *Lewes* was admitted as a branch of the Association, upon a condition, which has since been complied with—Letters from the several churches were read, which contained accounts of a large increase, and an universal harmony in the body of Christ.—The church at *Battle* returned their thanks to the Association for their advice last year respecting their Pastor, which advice has been evidently followed with a divine blessing.—The church at *Smarden* also returned thanks to the several churches for the assistance they received by their ministers the last year.—Concluded in prayer by the Moderator.

Public worship began at seven o'clock—Brother *Middleton* prayed—Brother *Humphrey* preached from Tit. ii. 14.—And concluded in prayer.

Wednesday morning met again at six o'clock.—Our brethren *Tomfitt*, *Fuller*, and *Williams*, prayed.—The request from *Ashford* respecting the division of the Association was considered, and it was the opinion of the majority that the usual plan was most advantageous.—Brother *Russell* who had been deputed to draw up the circular letter, read the same, which was unanimously approved, and agreed to be printed.—Concluded in prayer by the Moderator.

Public worship began at ten o'clock.—Brother *Russel* prayed.—Brother *Attwood* preached from 1 Thess. v. 25.—Brother *Booker* prayed.—Brother *Copping* preached from Eph. v. 1.—Concluded in prayer by Brother *Lloyd*.

Met again at four o'clock in the afternoon to conclude the business of the Association.—Brother *Finn* prayed.—A letter to the church at *Lewes* was read, approved, and signed by the Moderator.—Agreed to observe the first Wednesday in November next, as a day of fasting and prayer.—Agreed also to recommend to parents the catechising of their children, and a care of their morals.

Agreed

Agreed to hold the next Association at *Folkstone*, the first Tuesday and Wednesday in June, 1786.—Put up at the *Rose*.—Brother *Middleton*, and Brother *Lloyd*, to preach—In case of failure, Brother *Williams*, and Brother *Vidler*.—The assembly was then dismissed in prayer by the Moderator.

We have great reason to be very thankful for the evident, and gracious presence of our God in all our assemblies, for the peace and harmony of all our churches, and for the increase of Zion.
—PEACE be within her walls, and PROSPERITY in her palaces!

The STATE of the ASSOCIATED CHURCHES in 1785.

Addition	{	Baptized	-	-	88
		Received by Letter	-	-	3
		Restored	-	-	1
					—92
Diminution	{	Dismissed	-	-	4
		Excluded	-	-	3
		Dead	-	-	10
					—17
Increase					—
					75



